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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 000503

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PINS](#) [PINR](#) [KCRS](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: PRT SALAH AD DIN: PROVINCIAL COUNCIL AND ITS
CHAIR AWAKEN

REF: BAGHDAD 409

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Classified By: PRT Salah ad Din Team Leader Rick Bell
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (U) This is a PRT Tikrit, Salah ad Din reporting cable.

Summary

[1](#)2. (C) After months of meeting sporadically and without achieving quorum, the Salah ad Din Provincial Council (PC) has been increasingly active, meeting with quorum and efficiently conducting its business. PC Chairman Sheik Rasheed Osman has also become increasingly visible and vocal as evidenced by his interest in Samarra governance issues.
End Summary.

Provincial Council Awakes

[1](#)3. (U) After months meeting sporadically and without quorum, the Provincial Council has become increasingly active and efficient. For the first time since July, the PC has met in quorum for consecutive weeks. This is a welcome change from the general inactivity of the PC which took hold in November and continued through January. Deliberations over its 2008 budget, spurred by an increase of more than 60 billion ID (approx. USD 46 million) that was announced after it passed its first 2008 budget, were the key driver for this new flurry of activity.

[1](#)4. (C) In addition to budget deliberations, the PC has been active in local governance issues. The PC replaced the Yethrib (a village outside Balad) City Council (CC) Chair at the request of the Yethrib Mayor. This happened in a full and open PC session. (Comment: The Yethrib CC chair, according to PRT Balad Satellite lead, was ineffective and his removal was a welcome event. End Comment.) At a PC meeting last week, an entire session was spent reviewing the status of stalled 2007 Provincial Capital projects with responsible Directors General (i.e., heads of provincial offices of ministries), a rare exercise of its oversight role.

PC Chair Out and About

[1](#)5. (C) Over the past month, PC Chairman Sheik Rasheed Osman has been more visible than ever in the past. Rasheed takes a very legalistic view of his responsibilities and the role of the PC and views events through a legal lens. When the Province's privately owned satellite TV station came to the PC with a funding request, Rasheed first checked with the PRT to find out who legally owned it and then declined to fund it

because it was in his words a private business. (Note: The station was initially funded by the Coalition Forces and ownership was turned over last year to the station manager. Provincial officials would very much like to take control of the station and appear to have the money and agreement to do so as soon as the current owner/manager gives up the station due to his inability to make it economically viable. End Note.)

¶6. (C) Rasheed has also weighed in on the leadership situation in Samarra. Mahmoud Khalaf, the GoI-appointed mayor, visited Tikrit last week. (Note: Mayor Khalaf was the former Samarra Mayor who was reappointed by the GoI in early February (Reftel). End Note.) In a meeting between the two, Rasheed was quite forceful in expressing his displeasure that the Mayor's appointment did not follow the normal procedure in which the City Council appoints the Mayor by a majority vote. (Comment: The Samarra City Council in theory exists, but is not active. End Comment.) Rasheed made clear that once a new and representative City Council is ratified by PC vote, the Mayor should be appointed by them, as directed by Iraqi law. While Rasheed said he accepted the mayor's appointment and looked forward to working with him, his displeasure was evident.

Comment

¶7. (C) The rejuvenation of the PC and the increased activity of Sheik Rasheed are extremely welcome. We expect the provincial elections due in October will make the PC more geographically representative with Sunni Arabs' expected participation in this round of elections. The new PC should be well situated to aggressively carry out its duties, thanks to the extensive progress already made in budget formulation, including lateral coordination among the governor, PC and Directors General, and vertical coordination between the

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provincial and local levels. End Comment.

Bio Note

¶8. (C) Rasheed Osman, "Sheikh Rasheed," is the Salah ad Din PC Chairman and hails from Ash-Shirqat. Rasheed is a shrewd political operator. Rasheed initially ran the PC in a dictatorial fashion, but after a bit of a revolt by its members, the PC adopted rules of procedure, and Rasheed now runs meetings in a much more open fashion. He is a former Brigadier General in the Iraqi Police Service. He was also an executive in the Iraqi Northern Oil Company. He does not appear to understand English. He is an independent, despite an affiliation with the Reconciliation and Liberation Party. He has been accused of steering provincial capital projects to his Al Juboori tribesmen. He has told Poloff in confidence that he will not run in the next election.

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